

# A Analytical Study of the Philip Larkin's Selected Poetries

Dr. Ruchika<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Ruchika<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scholar of CMJ University, Sillong, Meghalya, India.

*Received: 11 December 2011 Accepted: 31 December 2011 Published: 15 January 2012*

---

## Abstract

Philip Arthur Larkin was an English poet and novelist. His first book of poetry, *The North Ship*, was published in 1945, followed by two novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947), but he came to prominence in 1955 with the publication of his second collection of poems, *The Less Deceived*, followed by *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). He contributed to *The Daily Telegraph* as its jazz critic from 1961 to 1971, articles gathered together in *All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961-1971* (1985), and he edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* (1973). He was the recipient of many honours, including the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. He was offered, but declined, the position of poet laureate in 1984, following the death of John Betjeman.

---

*Index terms*— *A Girl in Winter, High Windows, Jill, The North Ship, The Whitsun, Weddings.*

## 1 i. Introduction

Philip Larkin (1922-85) was one of the most highly regarded and respected poets of post-World War II Britain. He achieved considerable popularity although he was never an "easy" poet, and many of his poems offer intriguing insights to the mind of a complex and flawed personality.

By profession Philip Larkin was a librarian (as is the current reviewer) and he spent much of his career as the chief librarian at the Brynmor Jones Library of the University of Hull. Larkin moved to Hull from Belfast in 1955 and he spent the rest of his life there. He did not find Hull to be an easy city to get to like, and it was some years before he felt himself to be well settled there. His poem "Here"

was written some six and a half years after his move to Hull, when he had come to appreciate the city for its peculiarities and its remoteness. Hull's position in East Yorkshire makes it a place that few people visit unless they have a particular reason to do so, as it is not on the route to anywhere else.

The poem is a response to his statement in his earlier poem "Places, Loved Ones" (written in 1954 before he left Belfast) that: "No, I have never found / The place where I could say / This is proper ground / Here I shall stay". Now, in 1961, he feels ready to say that he has found his "Here", although his feelings towards Belfast had changed in the interim.

"Here" was the opening poem of his 1964 collection "The Whitsun Weddings", which is largely concerned with questions of identity and belonging. By concentrating on how a place accords with one's personality, and becomes part of one's identity, "Here" is an appropriate introduction.

The poem comprises four eight-line stanzas with an ABBACDDC rhyme scheme. However, Larkin makes considerable use of half-rhymes in this poem (e.g. solitude/mud, stands/ascends) and there are "rhymes" that are scarcely rhymes at all, such as dwelling/museum and trolleys/driers. The effect of this is to give the poem a relaxed, informal tone. Although the poem has structure it is not overplayed and one is barely aware of it as the poem proceeds.

"Here" is a survey of Hull and its surrounding countryside, viewed almost as though the poet is flying overhead in a helicopter, although it is clear in the opening stanza that Larkin is describing the approach to Hull from the west by rail from the "rich industrial shadows" of the Leeds conurbation. He uses the word "swerving" three times in this stanza to describe the train sweeping through "fields too thin and thistled to be called meadows"

## 2 II. CRITICAL RECEPTION

---

45 and passing the occasional "harshnamed halt". This is an unpromising journey, from "rich" to "thin", and in  
46 contradiction to the flow of "traffic all night north" (the rail line crosses the A1 London to Edinburgh road shortly  
47 after leaving Leeds). The poet is travelling into an unknown country, marked by "solitude".

48 However, the second stanza expresses the "surprise of a large town" which the train journey culminates in.  
49 Hull is off the beaten track as far as major UK cities are concerned, and it is indeed something of a surprise to  
50 find here a bustling port with its "domes and statues, spires and cranes". Hull is not a particularly Instead, he  
51 is more interested in the crowds of working-class people, the "residents from raw estates", who "push through  
52 plate-glass swing doors to their desires", which Larkin lists with enthusiasm as "cheap suits, red kitchen-ware,  
53 sharp shoes, iced lollies, / Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers". There is no snobbery on Larkin's part,  
54 merely a recognition that the people of this city are "a cut-price crowd, urban yet simple" whose concerns are  
55 the everyday ones of getting and spending.

56 Larkin again stresses the isolated position of Hull when he describes the people as "dwelling / Where only  
57 salesmen and relations come / Within a terminate and fishy-smelling / Pastoral ?".

58 He mentions one or two features that might set Hull apart from other cities, namely "the slave museum" (Hull  
59 was the home town of William Wilberforce, the 19th century anti-slavery campaigner) and its consulates, which  
60 would be there because Hull is a port of entry for North Sea ferries coming from continental Europe, but these  
61 are mixed in with "tattoo-shops" and "grim headscarfed wives" as though they are nothing special. In other  
62 words, whether isolated or not, this is an ordinary city that is getting on with things and, in more ways than  
63 one, minding its own business.

64 But then Larkin continues his west to east journey and moves into the countryside to the east of Hull, which  
65 is the district of Holderness characterised by flat open fields intersected by drainage channels. If few people visit  
66 Hull, even fewer go as far as Holderness, which has no settlements of any size and forms a peninsula with the  
67 North Sea on one side and the Humber Estuary on the other.

68 Larkin uses language very expressively to convey the solitude of this piece of land that is on the way to nowhere.  
69 This is "where removed lives / Loneliness clarifies" (the break comes across the third and fourth stanzas). "Here  
70 silence stands / Like heat". He uses words such as "unnoticed", "hidden" and "neglected" to emphasise its  
71 remoteness and quietness.

72 When the land ends the sea begins "suddenly beyond a beach of shapes and shingle". For Larkin this is a  
73 matter of rejoicing rather than regret, for it offers "unfenced existence". He ends the poem with a summary of  
74 the region, seen from its edge, as "facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach".

75 Larkin's journey throughout the poem makes it clear where he prefers to be. He is not hostile to the crowded  
76 city, but he can let it alone to get on with things without his presence. For him, the better existence is "unfenced"  
77 and "out of reach", both in physical and mental terms. He seeks solitude in which to be himself, and a place  
78 where that is possible.

79 However, there is a final unanswered question posed by this poem. If Larkin is seeking a "Here" where he  
80 truly himself, has he achieved that end when he admits that such a place is "out of reach", and is therefore not  
81 "here" but "there"? That is the question of identity that Larkin continued to address in other poems in "The  
82 Whitsun Weddings" and elsewhere.

### 83 2 ii. Critical Reception

84 Larkin has been viewed largely as a gloomy poet, misanthropic, and pessimistic about human endeavors. Although  
85 the author of only four volumes of verse, these, along with his two novels, continue to be reprinted, and Larkin  
86 finds British rivals only in Ted Hughes and Dylan Thomas. His accessible style, which often uses concrete images  
87 to move to symbolic celebration and expression of freedom, as well as the first-person speaker of many of his  
88 poems, have won him his following over the years. He is the "urban modern man, the insular Englishman,"  
89 as Seamus Heaney remarked in *Critical Inquiry*, whose title of this volume was adapted by Larkin from  
90 a remark made by Ophelia in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*: "I was the more deceived." Larkin wished to convey  
91 through this title his intention not to be "more deceived" by the realities of life but to be "less deceived" by them.  
92 In other words, he wished to convey through this title his view that poetry was a realistic interpretation of life,  
93 and that his own poetry would represent what he called his "sad-eyed" realism. He also wanted his poetry to  
94 be "clear-eyed". Larkin's realistic approach to life is evident in this volume in which his poems explore modern  
95 attitudes to work, leisure, love, and death; and this approach is evident also in his philosophical preoccupations  
96 with questions of belief, knowledge, and perception. All these concerns were prompted, and also reinforced, by the  
97 conditions of post-war England. Larkin's poems seem to be asking what people could believe in during the period  
98 of the post-war reconstruction which had begun immediately after the end of World War II in 1945. Larkin knew  
99 that the human senses sometimes deceive human beings because the expectations which our sense-experiences  
100 arouse in us do not always tally with what we subsequently experience. It was exactly this view which shaped  
101 the portrayal of the male protagonist in the poem *Deceptions* in this volume. But, in a more general The poets  
102 of the so-called Movement were believed to be empirical in their approach to life and in their representation of  
103 it. In the case of Larkin, this empiricism means a desire to see things clearly and truthfully. In this connection,  
104 we must remember that his poems in this volume were written in a particular political context, and that the  
105 ideas expressed in these poems were part of the general reevaluation of beliefs and values in post-war Britain. The  
106 political context in post-war Britain ranged from the concept of the British Empire to the concept of the Welfare

---

107 State which had begun to take shape. The idea of the Empire represented a glorious past, while the concept of  
108 the Welfare State represented an austere and mediocre domestic present. The feeling, that Britain had lost most  
109 of its glory and power, shows itself in the wistful melancholy and elegiac lyricism of the poems of Larkin in the  
110 volume entitled "The Less Deceived"; and this feeling helps us to understand Larkin's "sad-eyed realism".

### 111 3 ii. The Poems Going and Wedding-Wind

112 The war had inflicted severe damage on traditional religious ceremonies and rituals in Britain, and Larkin's  
113 poems of the immediate post-war period express an uneasy agnosticism. The poem Going is about death, but  
114 it also raises existential problems and constitutes, in fact, an ontological riddle. It offers a negative image of  
115 "being". Larkin's agnostic attitude even shaped his attitude to sexual relationships. The poem Wedding-Wind  
116 is a clear example of this. The wedding-night is depicted in the poem as a time of unique happiness; but the  
117 anxious questions of the second stanza of the poem imply a certain degree of doubt about whether such happiness  
118 can endure. The happiness of the newly-married woman offers hope, but the poem ends with a question mark.

119 iii. At Grass One of the critics has expressed the view that Larkin's poem At Grass became one of the most  
120 popular post-war poems because the retirement of some of the horses from horse races, and their lives of idleness  
121 and leisure, symbolized Britain's loss of her past glory. Thus this poem expresses much more than a simple  
122 feeling about race-horses in their old age. Another critic, agreeing more or less with this view, says that the  
123 horses in this poem are an emblem of a lost heroism and a lost social order. At Grass is, according to an eminent  
124 critic, an essentially English poem. Its Englishness is to be found not merely in its memories of "cups and stakes  
125 and handicaps" but also in its modified use of the pastoral convention. There are hints of eighteenth-century  
126 pastoralism in the elegiac mood of this poem. In addition to that, there is an elegant formality in the stanzaic  
127 and rhythmic structure of the poem; and there is also an appealing conversational quality in the casual "perhaps"  
128 and in the wistful question: "Do memories plague their ears like flies?" iv. Wires A more or less similar use of  
129 an animal fable has been made in the poem called Wires. Just as the poem At Grass is more than a poem about  
130 retired racehorses, so the poem Wires is something more than a statement about the effective control of cattle.  
131 Indeed, this poem too has an allegorical significance. It is a kind of parable so far as the technique of this poem  
132 is concerned. The poem's rhyme-scheme sets up a pattern of internal reflection, thereby reinforcing the concern  
133 with containment and enclosure. The shift from "widest prairies" in the opening line to "widest senses" in the  
134 closing line encourages the idea that freedom is an imaginary condition with no real existence. The familiar  
135 quatrains and the loose iambic lines convey a sense of authoritative wisdom so that the poem acquires the look  
136 of a well-established fable.

### 137 4 v. Myxomatosis

138 The poem Myxomatosis is another animal fable. It was prompted by the outbreak of a rabbit disease in certain  
139 parts of Britain in 1953. This poem too has its allegorical significance. Here the rabbit asks: "What trap is  
140 this? Where were its teeth concealed?" The reflections of the speaker in this poem suggest that the poem is  
141 seeking to establish a parallel between the fate of the diseased animal and a certain aspect of human life. The  
142 words "caught", "trap", and "jaws" suggest that the common experience being described is one of suffering and  
143 helplessness.

144 vi. The Poem Toads Some of the poems in this volume express resentment at the limitations of contemporary  
145 social experience, and some of them even express an attitude of rebellion. The poems Toads and Poetry of  
146 Departures are of this kind. In Toads, the element of fable once again appears in the nature of the question  
147 about freedom which is asked in the poem. The use of the word "toad" for work in the opening line seems to  
148 show that work is something unappealing and yet something natural. It is a poem which emerged from the  
149 post-war context; and, in its anxiety about work, it shows a similarity with a good deal of the literature of the  
150 nineteen-fifties. This poem is a sort of debate about individual rights and responsibilities in a modern democratic  
151 society. Furthermore, this poem may be read as an "utterance;" and, as such, it reveals one of the most innovative  
152 and culturally significant aspects of Larkin's poetry. Larkin makes ample use of colloquial English within the  
153 traditional lyric forms of writing. The opening stanza of Toads consists of two abrupt questions, the first of which  
154 is a rush of monosyllables; and, from the very outset, we are given a strong impression of a speaking voice. The  
155 language is( D D D D ) E Year

156 vigorous and colloquial. Syntactically as well, the poem takes the form of an argument, with conjunctions  
157 and exclamations providing the necessary cohesion and linkage. All this shows that poetry may be regarded as  
158 social discourse. Then there is the ludicrous alliteration of "lecturers, lispers, losels, louts," etc; and this suggests  
159 how social types may arbitrarily be classified. Thus the poem indicates the division and the differences within a  
160 social context. There are people who live on their wits, and there are people who live like gypsies. In respect of  
161 its socio-linguistic range, this poem very skillfully combines both conformism and nonconformism; it begins in a  
162 mood of rebellion and defiance, and it ends in a mood of quietism and apparent acceptance.

### 163 5 vii. Church Going

164 Church Going, written in 1954, clearly reveals the social context of the time when it was written. It was a time  
165 of general decline in the attendance in churches which had begun to take place in 1945. This poem expresses

166 the view that faith and belief in religion must die but that the spirit of tradition represented by the English  
167 Church cannot come to an end. Larkin's agnosticism becomes more understandable if we look at this poem in  
168 the national and the international context of the post-war years. The poem refers both to the erosion of the  
169 Church as an institution and to the perpetuation of some kind of ritual observance. In other words, the poet  
170 here explores different perceptions of the same event (the event being the decline of attendance in the churches).

## 171 **6 viii. The Poem Next, Please**

172 Several poems in this volume are more existential than empirical in the sense that they are basically concerned  
173 with modes of looking at death, destiny, contingency, and nothingness. The poem Next, Please, for instance,  
174 can well be read in terms of the existentialist dictum that human life in its entirety is life facing death. This  
175 poem too is written in a colloquial style. Its title is a piece of black comedy, and its dominant image—a ship—is  
176 based on a popular phrase. Besides, this poem seems to have been written from a gloomier philosophical position  
177 than Wires or Toads; and the final stanza of this poem is reminiscent of the work of the French symbolist poets,  
178 though its stylistic features are, on the whole, the same as those of the other poems in this volume.

## 179 **7 ix. Poetry of Departures**

180 Poetry of Departures is, like Toads, a quietistic poem which manages to subdue its own rebellious feelings.  
181 Besides, the remark "Then she undid her dress" in this poem carries the same emotional thrill for the speaker as  
182 the line "He walked out on the whole crowd" in the same poem.

183 x. Some of the Love-Poems Although the sexual act is generally believed to bring about fulfilment and relief,  
184 a sexual act in Larkin's poems is deceptive, and its promise proves to be empty or false. In the poem Places,  
185 Loved Ones, for instance, the speaker admits, with a mixture of disappointment and relief, that he has never  
186 met that special person who could claim everything which he owned. Similarly, the speaker in the poem If,  
187 My Darling insists upon his own realistic judgment of life's deficiencies, and carefully avoids any idealization of  
188 womanhood. Indeed, Larkin's so-called love-poems are often disappointed reflections on failure, impotence, and  
189 helplessness. The poem Marriages cynically announces that in many cases marriage is a matter of accepting  
190 an undesirable partner in whose company such words as liberty, impulse, and beauty can never be mentioned.  
191 The poem addressed by Larkin to his imaginary wife is an unflattering poem. To marry means losing one's  
192 freedom, and giving a permanent shape to boredom and failure. In Larkin's poetry, then, love promises "to solve  
193 and satisfy", but it also threatens the independence of the individual. Sexual desire is also the subject of the  
194 poem Dry-Point. Here the physical experience is presented as a struggle accompanied by fear and panic; and the  
195 aftermath is one of disappointment and disillusionment. In the poem called Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph  
196 Album, we come across a series of erotic fantasies about the woman's body, especially when it is "yielded up"  
197 and when it is "once open". Like Dry-Point, this poem offers a particular statement of sexuality in which an  
198 emerging liberal attitude is balanced against traditional ideas of sexual courtship and conduct. However, by the  
199 year 1974, when the volume entitled "High Windows" was published, this oblique eroticism in Larkin's poetry  
200 had given way to candid and even obscene vocabulary.

## 201 **8 xi. A Critic's Comment Upon the Poems**

202 As the eminent critic already quoted says: "There is a complex and distinctive relationship between the linguistic  
203 structure of the poems and the changing social structure of the post-war years, and this is clearly evident in  
204 the extent to which the poems modify traditional lyric forms by incorporating the vocabulary and phrasing of  
205 contemporary English speech. The interest and appeal of the poetry for many readers is a consequence of its  
206 significant and decisive revamping of English poetic diction." b) "The whitsun weddings" (1964) i. The Influence  
207 of the Changed Social Climate on These Poems

208 The poems in the volume entitled "The Whitsun Weddings" clearly show the influence of the changing social  
209 and cultural climate of England in the late nineteen-fifties and the early nineteen-sixties. The

## 210 **9 Year**

211 poems show the impact of mass consumerism which had come into vogue during that period. This may be seen  
212 in Here, the opening poem in this volume, where we come across the following lines:

213 ii. Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes, iced lollies, Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers

214 This may be seen also in the poem Mr. Bleaney in which the speaker disapproves of the radio-set which  
215 is described as "the jabbering set" which Mr. Bleaney had compelled his landlady to buy. The same thing is  
216 evident in the poem Afternoons in which there is a reference to the new recreation-ground, the husbands in skilled  
217 trades, "an estateful of washing," and the television-set near which lie the albums containing family photographs.  
218 Other poems in which we find evidence of mass consumerism include The Large Cool Store, Sunny Prestatyn,  
219 and Essential Beauty. The attitudes of the poet in these poems range from cynical resentment to a subdued  
220 kind of melancholy, while the language and the syntax modulate with increasing tension between the colloquial  
221 and the lyrical. There are also, in these poems, elements of irony and parody as distancing devices of which the  
222 poem called Naturally the Foundation Will Bear Your Expenses is a conspicuous example. Several poems in this  
223 volume have been written in the form of imaginary dialogues. What proves to be most interesting in the poems

---

224 of this volume is the dynamic and complex relationship between textual structure and the social circumstances  
225 of the time. In fact, the poems in this volume function as social discourse. Several poems here show the new  
226 consumerism to be in conflict with the social ideals of the Welfare State. Larkin surely celebrates the affluence  
227 of the time but he also feels troubled by the increased materialism which this affluence signified and encouraged.  
228 The result is that both integration and alienation greet us in these poems. The motivating impulse behind many  
229 of the poems is the search for an unalienated existence. This is clearly the case in *Here, Mr. Bleaney*, and  
230 *Dockery and Son*. The poem *Here* moves from night to day (towards the rising sun), and from the industrial  
231 scene and motorroads to the fields and the meadows. We get the feeling from this poem that industry had begun  
232 to overshadow the landscape in England; but there is also a faint suggestion of England's industrial heritage. As  
233 for the technical side of this poem, we find here an abundance of compound nouns and adjectives, and a tumbling  
234 catalogue of objects.

235 iii. Differences of Class and of Culture, Depicted in These Poems

236 Differences of class and of culture are very much in prominence in the poems of this volume. The poem  
237 *Here* depicts a restlessness arising not only from different conceptions of place but also from an implied contrast  
238 between the solitary spectator and the collective lives of those whom he describes in the poem. Similarly the  
239 poem *Mr. Bleaney* depicts in a dramatic manner the cultural differences not only between the new tenant (the  
240 poet) and his predecessor (Mr. Bleaney), but also between the tenant and the landlady. Technically, the poem's  
241 colloquial effects derive from strongly marked pauses (the use of caesura) and rapid enjambment within and  
242 between the stanzas. The chief contrast in the poem is between the intellectual interests of the speaker and  
243 the manual work which Mr. Bleaney used to do. The term "Bodies" stands for a factory which manufactured  
244 car-bodies. The use of this term indicates that Mr. Bleaney was a worker in such a factory. Differences of class  
245 and of culture are evident in the very manner in which the speaker proceeds to describe the life-style of Mr.  
246 Bleaney. In the poem *Home is So Sad*, we witness a deserted room: Look at the pictures and the cutlery. The  
247 music in the piano stool. That vase?? The widow in the poem *Love Songs in Age* finds her songs while "looking  
248 for something else". What the songs contain is an ideal of love: Still promising to solve and satisfy, And set  
249 unchangeably in order. In Larkin's view, human aspirations to something better are always frustrated. The  
250 *Inevitability of Death for All Classes of Society*

251 The poem *Nothing to be Said* implies that life for all classes of society and at all levels of culture is ultimately  
252 the same because all life inevitably ends in death. From this point of view, the lives of "cobble-close families in  
253 mill-towns" are really no different from the lives of the "nomads among stones" or from those of "small-statured  
254 tribes." All human activity-work, play, and prayer-is darkened by the shadow of death. The stubborn fact of  
255 death seems to nullify any thoughts of a better life. In the poem *Selfs the Man*, a comparison between two  
256 kinds of life-style seems to reveal essential differences, but in the end proves very, little. In the poem *Days*, an  
257 over-confident assertion of what we do with time shifts into a more sombre reflection with the insistent question:  
258 "Where can we live but days?" At the end we are told that asking such existential questions would 'intrude  
259 upon the lives of the priest and the doctor who are ultimately responsible for our spiritual and physical welfare.  
260 *Dockery and Son* is also a meditation on alternative ways of living. The alternatives are to have a wife and a son,  
261 and to have no wife and therefore no son. People are swayed by fashion and habit rather than by any ideas and  
262 inclinations of their own. At the end, however, this difference between the poet himself and *Dockery* is reduced  
263 to a minimum by the thought of old( D D D D ) E Year

264 age and death which inevitably must come to both of them. Unhappiness and death are the fate of almost  
265 everyone and every class of society. The young couples in the poem *Afternoons* find that something is pushing  
266 them "to the side of their own lives." In the poem *Ambulances* the impossibility of escaping from disease and  
267 death is emphasized. The poem *Faith Healing* complains that "all is wrong," and expresses scepticism about the  
268 practices of an American evangelist with 'he concluding phrase: "and all time has disproved."

269 **10 iv. The Title Poem of This Volume**

270 The title poem of this volume had its origin in a railway journey which Larkin made from Oxford to Hull.  
271 The breadth and energy of this poem result partly from its search for coherence and unity not only among the  
272 changing landscapes of post-war England but among the lives of the people who live there. The poem makes  
273 an extended use of the urban pastoral perspective to impose a sense of unity and continuity upon geographical  
274 and historical divisions. In this poem an "important idea is the writer's recognition that weddings are moments  
275 of painful loss as well as of joyous celebration. Marriage is like "a happy funeral" and "a religious wounding".  
276 However, the specific occasion of this poem was Whitsun (or Pentecost) as described in the New Testament.  
277 Whitsun, therefore, serves here as a symbol of unity and coherence, and has a secular rather than any narrow  
278 religious significance. c) "High windows" (1974) i. A Close Link Between These Poems and the Social Conditions

279 The poems in this volume proved to be very provocative and disturbing to many people in England not  
280 only because of their" contents but also because of their style and technique. These poems record the author's  
281 impressions of the breakdown of the ideas of social unity and coherence in England, and they also provide  
282 evidence of what seemed to be the fractured linguistic style of the author. Between 1964 and 1967 England  
283 passed through an acute economic crisis. Larkin's ironic poem *Homage to a Government* recognizes the economic  
284 crisis but interprets it in terms of the idleness and the greed of the people. The poem *Going, Going* depicts the  
285 environmental deterioration going on in England of the time, and expresses the poet's fear that England would

286 become the "first slum of Europe." But here again the real cause of the misfortune is money, with the auctioneer's  
287 cry of "going, going" to suggest that the countryside was being sold off. In its anxiety about the environment,  
288 this poem makes a cynical approach to the whole modernizing and commercializing ethic of successive post-  
289 war governments in England. Although Larkin's later poems have been thought to be deeply conservative in  
290 their outlook, yet the political tradition to which his poetry clings is that of liberal humanism. Thus the poem  
291 *Show Saturday* upholds the social value of the annual agricultural show. This poem gathers its momentum  
292 by assembling the speaker's various impressions of the events of one whole day. The sheer amount of detail  
293 contributes emphatically to the significance with which the agricultural display is endowed in the final stanza. In  
294 this stanza we find an alliterative and hyphenated collection of miscellaneous people and things: The men with  
295 hunters, dog-breeding wool-defined women, Children all swaddle-swank, mug-faced middle-aged wives? The poem  
296 called *Vers de Societe* refuses to recognize any easy distinction between creative solitude and social obligation,  
297 but at the same time it succeeds in discarding its own hardened attitude. The poem opens with a crude dismissal  
298 of "company": My wife and I have asked a crowd of craps To come and waste their time and ours: At the  
299 end, however this same company seems preferable to meditating on "failure and remorse." Growing old makes  
300 companionship more desirable and more necessary. The poem *Sad Steps* invokes a symbolist idiom: "Lozenge of  
301 love! Medallion of art!" But this attitude is quickly dismissed because, as very often in this volume of poems,  
302 the moral urge drives away the aesthetic impulse.

## 303 11 ii. A Freer Attitude Towards Sex

304 In These Poems The poems in this volume express a much freer attitude towards sex. Already permissiveness  
305 had given way to sexual inhibitions in England; and Larkin acknowledges this fact in the following ironic lines of  
306 the poem *Annus Mirabilis*.

307 Sexual intercourse began In nineteen sixty-three (Which was rather late for me) Between the end of the  
308 Chatterley ban And the Beatles' first L.P. The assertion in the poem that life was never better than In nineteen  
309 sixty-three is diluted by the speaker's regret that he himself arrived on the scene too late, and also by the rhetoric  
310 of the middle stanza. The suggestion that "life became a brilliant breaking of the bank" is just one of many  
311 money metaphors in this volume of poems. These metaphors represent Larkin's cynical reaction to the economic  
312 mismanagement of the time in Britain.

313 The poem *High Windows* is an ironic tribute to the sexual freedom of the nineteen-sixties, though the closing  
314 lines of this poem lift it beyond irony to a more intense, though puzzling level. The speaker's observation, "I  
315 know this is paradise," and his exaggerated view of endless happiness anticipate the poem's stylistic and rhetorical  
316 transition. The poem suggests the idea of a place inaccessible to language, a place where ultimate meaning resides:  
317 "The suncomprehending glass, and beyond it, the deep blue air." The remoteness of high windows sums up that  
318 distant imaginary region, but the intervening glass of the window-panes also marks the limits of vision. The  
319 poem visualizes some bright element of existence, but its final

## 320 12 E

321 Year bright image is one of extreme yearning rather than of transcendent fulfilment. What gives this poem its  
322 impressive modernity is not only its blunt colloquialism but its radical disjunction between word and world.  
323 According to one critic , this poem begins as if it were a poem about sex but then it becomes a poem about  
324 religion. There is a parallel throughout the poem between the sexual freedom of the new generation and the  
325 free-thinking agnosticism of the old generation: No God any more, or sweating in the dark About hell and that??.

326 In the end, both are found to be an illusory notion of freedom. According to another critic , beyond the  
327 immediate concern with sex and religion, there is also a political dimension to this poem. The poem is in  
328 keeping with the ideas of liberal politics. Larkin recognizes oppression, and yet conceives of freedom in individual  
329 and imaginative terms. Similarly it is a combination of liberal humanism and agnostic feeling which gives to  
330 the poem *The Building* a special prominence in this volume ("*High Windows*"). Some other Concerns in the  
331 Poems of This Volume Furthermore, this volume shows an unusual interest in moments of historical change or  
332 imagined scenes from the past. Such poems as *The Card-Players*, *How Distant*, and *Living's* explore the values  
333 and beliefs of contrasting social groups, but also go back in their search for something elemental and lasting in  
334 human existence. Besides, anxieties about a culture apparently dominated by money pervade the later poems,  
335 as has already been indicated in the remarks about the poems *Homage to a Government* and *Going, Going*.  
336 The poem having the title of *Money* is wholly and purely a statement of alienation. Two Poems Without Any  
337 Element of Conflict in Them Two of Larkin's later poems are characterized by an intense elegiac lyricism. These  
338 are *Dublineseque* and *The Explosion*. The imaginative release in these two poems is not into some nihilistic  
339 element but Into a vision of social solidarity. There is no conflict in these poems between the individual and  
340 society, or between the disillusioned intelligence of the poet and the urgent demands of other people. These are  
341 poems profoundly concerned with social ideals and beliefs. In the ultimate analysis the values of Larkin's poetry  
342 are deeply in opposition to the rigid monetarism and economic individualism which came to dominate the late  
343 nineteen-seventies.

344 Before Larkin moved to Hull, he wrote and published *The North Ship* (1946) and a pamphlet, *XX Poems*  
345 (1951), which he published himself. The former book is widely considered to reflect the poet's early influences,

346 W. H. Auden and W. B. Yeats; the latter, his emergent mature voice. "I felt for the first time," he said, "that  
347 I was speaking for myself." In his next work, *The Less Deceived* (1955), the poet expressed his lifelong need  
348 to expose false ideals and illusions. *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) has been said to express the prosperity of  
349 Britain's post-war mass culture and is colored by a wide range of tones. In *High Windows* (1974), the poet, ever  
350 cynical and introspective, had now entered middle-age and was poised to look at death, or, as he wrote in the  
351 final lines of "High Windows," eternity.

352 After *High Windows* Larkin wrote no new poetry except for the famous "Aubade." *Required Writing* (1983)  
353 is a compilation of prose written between 1955 and 1982. One who could not "live a day without jazz," Larkin  
354 contributed music reviews to the *Daily Telegraph*, which were collected in *All What Jazz* (1970). His two novels,  
355 *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947), featuring naive, female protagonists, were for Larkin "oversized  
356 poems."

357 *Collected Poems* (1988) appeared posthumously, edited by fellow "Movement" poet Anthony Thwaite, who  
358 decided to include some of Larkin's unpublished verse to demonstrate his editorial ability, his development as an  
359 artist, and problems he solved over days, months, or even a decade, in various verses.

360 Pithy, wry and understated, Philip Larkin was the master chronicler of the ordinary, suburban human  
361 experience, using the rhythms of everyday speech to memorabl effect.

### 362 13 Conclusion



Figure 1:

363 1 2 3 4 5

---

<sup>1</sup>© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)

<sup>2</sup>© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)

<sup>3</sup>© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)

<sup>4</sup>© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)

<sup>5</sup>© 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US)



- 
- 364 [Regan ()] , Stephen Regan . 1997. Philip Larkin, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 365 [Courtenay (2005)] , Tom Courtenay . 21 April 2005. (author and reader)
- 366 [Moran ()] ‘A People’s History of English and American Literature’. Eugene V Moran . *The Power of Delight: A*  
367 *Lifetime in Literature: Essays*, John Bayley, Leo Carey (ed.) (New York; Nova, 17. Motion, Andrew; London;  
368 Motion, Andrew) 2002. 1993. 2005. 1962-2002. Norton & Company. 18. (Philip Larkin: A Writer’s Life)
- 369 [James (1983)] *An Affair of Sanity: Philip Larkin, The Observer*, Clive James . 25 November 1983.
- 370 [Bloomfield ()] B C Bloomfield . *Philip Larkin A Bibliography*, (London) 2002. 1933-1994. British Library.
- 371 [Bowen ()] Phil Bowen . *A Gallery to Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets*, (Liverpool) 2008. Liverpool  
372 University Press.
- 373 [Chatterjee and Kumar ()] Sisir Chatterjee , Kumar . *Philip Larkin: Poetry That Builds Bridges*, (New Delhi)  
374 2006. Atlantic Publishers.
- 375 [Cooper ()] Stephen Cooper . *Philip Larkin: Subversive Writer*, (Brighton) 2004. Sussex Academic Press.
- 376 [Crawford (2000)] ‘Devolving English Literature’. Robert Crawford . *About Larkin* 10. Gilroy, John (ed.) 2000.  
377 April 2008. Philip Larkin Society (Hull. (25) p. . (Larkin in the Dock)
- 378 [Larkin et al. (1964)] *Down Cemetery Road”. Monitor. episode 140*, Philip Larkin , John Betjeman , Patrick  
379 Garland , Hull , England , Bbc , Bbc One . 12 December 1964. (director)
- 380 [Bradford ()] *First Boredom Then Fear: The Life of Philip Larkin*, Richard Bradford . 2004. London: Peter  
381 Owen.
- 382 [Banville (2006)] *Homage to Philip Larkin, The New York Review of Books*, John Banville . 2006. 23 February  
383 2006.
- 384 [Paulin (1990)] ‘Into the Heart of Englishness’. Tom Paulin . *The Times Literary Supplement*, Stephen Regan  
385 (ed.) 1990. July 1990. 1997. Palgrave Macmillan. p. .
- 386 [Johnson ()] Matthew Johnson . *Ideas of Landscape: An Introduction*, (Oxford) 2007. Blackwell Publishing.
- 387 [Orwin (2008)] ‘Larkin, Ideology and Critical Violence: A Case of Wrongful Conviction’. James Orwin . *Serious*  
388 *Earth: Philip Larkin’s American Tape*, (Basingstoke) April 2008. 2008. Palgrave Macmillan. p. . (The  
389 Watershed recording))
- 390 [Ingelbien ()] *Misreading England: Poetry and Nationhood Since the Second World War*, Raphael Ingelbien .  
391 2002. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- 392 [Goodman (1997)] ‘My particular talents’: Philip Larkin’s 42-year career as a Librarian’. Richard Goodman .  
393 *About Larkin* October 1997. Hull.
- 394 [Swarbrick ()] ‘Out of Reach: The Poetry of Philip Larkin’. Andrew Swarbrick . *Larkin at Sixty*, (Basingstoke;  
395 Thwaite, Anthony; London) 1995. 1982. Faber and Faber. 26.
- 396 [Powell ()] Neil Powell . *Carpenters of Light*, (Lanham) 1980. Rowman & Littlefield.
- 397 [Pretending to be Me: Philip Larkin, a Portrait (Audio CD)] *Pretending to be Me: Philip Larkin, a Portrait*  
398 *(Audio CD)*, Time Warner AudioBooks.
- 399 [Corcoran ()] *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry*, Neil Corcoran . 2007. Cambridge:  
400 Cambridge University Press.
- 401 [Brennan ()] *The Philip Larkin I Knew*, Maeve Brennan . 2002. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- 402 [Tuma ()] Keith Tuma . *Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry*, (New York) 2001. Oxford  
403 University Press. (Audio and television)
- 404 [Sheppard ()] ‘Unnoticed in the Casual Light of Day: Philip Larkin and the Plain Style’. Robert Sheppard .  
405 *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and its Discontents*, (Liverpool; Stojkovic, Tijana; New York) 2005.  
406 1950-2000. 2006. CRC Press. 24.